

REMARKS

This Amendment is submitted in response to the Office Action mailed on March 2, 2011.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 2 and 5-11 under 35 USC §103(a) over US Patent No. 5,768,370 to Maatta, et al. (Maatta) in view of WIPO Patent No. WO 0205610 to Hargis, David (David).

To support the rejection, the Examiner asserts that Maatta discloses a discussion unit [20; Fig. 1], comprising a closed casing [outer case 30 of cover 28] having a base [outer cover face 102 of cover 28] and an additional narrow circumferentially closed edge [rim of outer cover face 102 of cover 28] and at least one exchangeable portion [fixing collar 60] configured as a closed rim [fixing collar 60] that is removably mounted to the closed casing [outer case 30 of cover 28] so as to cover only the narrow circumferentially closed edge [rim of outer cover face 102 of cover 28] of the closed casing [outer case 30 of cover 28].

The Examiner further asserts that Maatta does not disclose the feature that the exchangeable portion [fixing collar 60] "consists of a hollow only circumferentially" closed rim [fixing collar 60], that David discloses a hollow circumferentially closed rim and that it would have been obvious to use David's removable panel [110] to cover only a circumferential edge of Maatta.

Applicants respectfully disagree. Maatta discloses a telephone [20] with a housing base [22]. A cover [28] is removably attached to the housing base [22].

The cover [28] includes an outer face [30], the outer face [30] including an outer face cover [102]. The cover [28] further includes a rim [100] generally congruent with a peripheral flange [90] of fixing collar [60], which fixing collar [60] is removably attachable to the cover [28]. The rim [100] is upstanding from the outer cover face [102].

Maatta's outer cover face [102] of cover [28] is not equivalent to a base (414) as claimed. Applicants' base (414) comprises the entire closed casing (410), i.e., surrounding the closed casing (410). Maatta's outer cover face [102] and cover [28] comprise only one portion of housing base [22] (upon which is attached fixing collar [60]).

In order to better highlight this feature that distinguishes the invention from Maatta, however, applicants hereby amend independent claim 1 to qualify that the narrow circumferentially closed edge (424) completely surrounds the closed casing (410).

Maatta's rim [100] surrounds or embodies a peripheral edge of outer cover face [102] of cover [28], but is not a narrow circumferentially closed edge of the outer closed casing [outer face 30], i.e., completely surrounding the closed casing.

Hence, even assuming for arguments sake that David discloses a hollow only circumferentially closed rim, as claimed, modifying Maatta to include David's removable panel 110 would not realize the invention, as claimed. But perhaps as importantly, David's removable panel 110 does not comprise an exchangeable portion consisting of a hollow only circumferentially closed rim, as claimed.

David's panel 110 is mounted to cover and overlap outer perimeter portions of a display device to create an aperture (open or closed) for "better viewing." This is clear by viewing the interior surface of David's Fig. 3. David's Fig. 3 shows that latch stop 300 defines the circumferential edge of the display device and the portion of the panel 110 that extends in from the circumferential edge, which on its upper or top side (Fig. 1) acts as a horizontal band.

While David's panel 110 certainly has a side edge (see Fig. 2), and a beveled edge 120 set in from the sides edge (see Fig. 1), none of David's aforementioned features qualify panel 110 as an exchangeable portion consisting of a hollow only circumferentially closed rim.

Applicants further respectfully disagree that it would have been obvious to the skilled artisan to modify Maatta in view of the teachings of David as there is no teachings or suggestion in either reference for doing so.

Moreover, modifying Maatta's fixing collar [60] to consist of a hollow only circumferentially closed rim would change the dimensions of window or aperture [64] as well tab [96] and the button openings, as shown. So modified, Maatta would be unable operate as intended (*see In re Gordon*, 221 USPQ 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1984)), and/or that its respective principles of operation would be so changed (*see In re Ratti*, 123 USPQ 349 (CCPA 1959)) that the proposed modifications could not be found to be obvious under the law (*see* MPEP 2143.01).

Applicants respectfully assert, therefore, that claim 1 as amended, and claims 2 and 5-11 that depend from claim 1, are patentable over Maatta in view of David, and respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection, therefore.

Applicants also take this opportunity to present new independent claim 12, which calls out the feature of claim 1 as amended and claim 7.

New claim 12 recites a discussion unit (10) for use in a conference system and adapted for connection to at least one second discussion unit (10), the discussion unit (10) comprising an essentially closed casing (410) having a base (414), a first section (452), a second section (454), a narrow circumferentially closed edge (424) surrounding the closed casing (410) and an exchangeable portion (420) consisting of a hollow only circumferentially closed rim (422) that is removably mounted to the closed casing (410) so as to cover only the narrow circumferentially closed edge (424) of the closed casing (410) using an interconnection (426), wherein the first section (452) and the second section (454) are adapted to be attached to each other in an arrangement that renders the interconnection (426) inaccessible from outside of the casing (410).

Maatta's essentially closed casing (outer face [30] of cover [28]) cannot be said to "include" or "comprise" a first section (fixing collar [60]) and a second section (housing [22]). That is, fixing collar [60] attaches to cover [28], which cover [28] may be part of base [20], but fixing collar [60] is not part of base [20]. Perhaps as importantly, when Maatta's first section (fixing collar [60]) is attached to cover [28] of second section (housing [22]), locking tabs [92, 94] and locking recesses [102, 104] are not rendered in accessible for the outside of the closed casing (outer face [30] of cover [28]), as claimed.

Hence, new claim is respectively distinguishable from Maatta, whether Maatta is taken alone or further in view of David.

Accordingly, the application including each of pending claims 1, 2 and 5-12, is believed to be in condition for allowance. Action to this end is courteously solicited. However, should the Examiner have any further comments or suggestions, the undersigned would very much welcome a telephone call in order to discuss appropriate claim language that will place the application in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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